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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 003555

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: INITIAL RUSSIAN REACTION TO OSCE MINISTERIAL

REF: MOSCOW 3424

Classified By: POL MC Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) Russia's MFA has not yet issued a formal statement on the results of the OSCE ministerial, but the Russian press focused on President Medvedev's proposal for a new European security treaty and hailed the ministerial as an endorsement of it. Commentators were more restrained on the concept of the security treaty, but argued that the discussion put Russia on equal footing with the EU and U.S. on determining the future of European security. Preliminary indications are that the OSCE ministerial checked the box of placing the proposed European security treaty on the organization's agenda. End summary.

No official comment

2. (C) The MFA's spokesman Andrei Nesterenko told the press on December 1 that Russia viewed the ministerial as "a test that would determine what trends dominated the OSCE -- constructive, aimed at uniting the States Parties around the really key issues of our time, or destructive, which were often seen as narrow foreign policy interests of individual countries." However, Senior Counsellor Vladimir Yanin of the MFA's OSCE desk refused to comment on how Russia's European security treaty proposal or other interventions were received at the OSCE Ministerial in Helsinki or whether the OSCE passed the MFA's test. He deferred any judgment of the meetings to Lavrov, although Yanin would not say whether the ministry was preparing a statement or release on behalf of Lavrov.

Press not reluctant

3. (SBU) While MFA representatives were reluctant to pass judgment on the OSCE, the press was not. State-owned Rossiyskaya Gazeta printed that "Europe has become ready now to start a gradual, thorough analysis of Moscow's initiative" for a European security treaty, pointing to the resumption of negotiations with the EU on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the decision at the NATO ministerial to resume cooperation. Under the heading, "Russia Determines OSCE Agenda," business-oriented Kommersant concluded that "the majority of the participants hailed Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's idea to develop a new European security agreement and suggested concentrating on it." However, the article concluded that Russia had decided not to approach the U.S. directly on its proposal, as "Moscow has finally given up on the idea of reaching any agreement with the outgoing administration and is putting all of its hopes on Obama's team."

Russia resurges

14. (C) Not all commentators warmly embraced Medvedev's proposal, but many noted that the discussion enhanced Russia's position. Andrey Fedorov, Director of Political Programs at the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and a former deputy foreign minister, in a Kommersant op-ed was less firm in his support, saying "maybe a new project should be launched, while remaining mindful of existing OSCE mechanisms." He added that the ability of the OSCE to sign a new declaration or adapt depended "to a great extent on Russia's position." Sergei Kortunov, professor at the State University for Higher Economics, told us that by placing the proposed European security treaty before the OSCE and the EU's member-states, Russia had, "for the first time in decades, put forward its priorities rather than have Europe and the U.S. impose them on us." To him, the proposal put Russia on "equal footing" with the EU and the U.S. on determining the future of security institutions in Europe.

Comment

15. (C) The MFA may yet issue a formal statement regarding Russian views of the OSCE ministerial, but, as Yanin put it, "we defer to Minister Lavrov on this matter." However, Russian commentators have already laid the groundwork for the MFA to declare a success in convincing OSCE members of the need for a new European security treaty. The support of France is now assumed, with the name of the proposal changing

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slightly to the Medvedev-Sarkozy European security arrangement. Accurate or not, Russia views Medvedev's proposal as firmly on the agenda of the OSCE and in future bilateral discussions within Europe and with the U.S.
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